



Frequently Asked Questions

Bone Densitometry

Norland DEXA scanner for bone densitometry:

“Norland bone densitometry targets a fast growing market where new drug therapies are supporting the early diagnosis of osteoporosis. As women reach 45 years of age, we expect that bone density screening will become a part of the routine physical, along with the standard Pap smear.”

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is characterized by excessive loss of bone mineral and deterioration of the skeleton over time. It typically occurs in women over the age of 45. Those particularly at risk include Caucasian or Asian women who are thin or small-framed, postmenopausal women with a low level of estrogen and women with a family history of the disease. Alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine use have also been implicated.

Osteoporosis typically has no overt symptoms in its early stages. The first sign is often bone fracture. Osteoporosis leads to increased risk of fracture, chronic pain and immobility, usually at the hip, forearm or spine. The National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF) estimates that osteoporosis affects more than 22 million women in the United States, and if unchecked, predicts that it will affect more than 30 million women by 2010 as the population ages. The post-menopausal female population has the highest incidence of osteoporosis and the highest rate of morbidity (loss of quality of life) and mortality due to osteoporosis.

Hip fractures produce the most serious consequences. According to the NOF, there are more than 300,000 hip fractures per year in the United States and 50% of hip fracture patients never walk independently again. The NOF estimates that in the United States, osteoporosis contributes to more than 1.5 million fractures annually, a majority of which were of the spine and hip. Annual direct medical expenditures for osteoporosis and associated fractures are \$13.8 billion, a figure that is expected to increase to \$62 billion by the year 2020.

Until recently, osteoporosis was thought to be an inevitable and untreatable consequence of aging. The availability of more effective drug therapies and an increased focus on women's health issues and preventive medical practices have created a growing awareness among patients and physicians that osteoporosis is, in many cases, a disease that can be treated. The National Osteoporosis Risk Assessment study of over 200,000 patients, published in the December 2001 issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, showed a strong relationship between peripheral bone density measurement and fracture risk and recommended more aggressive programs in primary care settings to identify and treat those at risk.

In February, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists issued an opinion which recommends that all postmenopausal women 65 years of age or older and others with certain risk factors be screened for osteoporosis. They noted that dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) remains the “gold standard” for bone mineral density testing citing DEXA's high precision, minimal radiation exposure and rapid screening time.

Central DXA Systems

Central measurement systems include the Excell™ which measure bone mass density and bone mineral content and compares results to reference populations and the patient's prior examination. This system can perform axial (hip and spine) and peripheral scans. Please contact us for an appointment or for more information. (615) 896-3737

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